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IC 75-2476

25 AUG 1975

**MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence**

**SUBJECT: Review of Alert Memoranda**

1. This memorandum transmits to you our completed study of the Alert Memoranda produced to date. You have already seen some of the findings in the material provided you for your testimony before the House Select Committee.

2. The document was produced in the Product Review Division of the IC Staff, but would not have been possible without the co-operation and assistance we received from the NIOs, other members of the producing community, and a number of senior aides of top policymakers who were able to provide us with the flavor of how the device is viewed by the primary recipients.

3. You asked about the proper dissemination of Alert Memoranda and the extent to which they have affected our own alert process. These points are discussed in the paper. In brief:

a. We think the present dissemination of some 80 copies is too many, particularly since the substance of each Alert Memorandum is placed also in the NID and the NIB.

b. Alert Memoranda have raised the alert posture of the community in both collection and analysis. The particular steps taken have not, however, been spelled out equally well to the reader in the way the USIB approved "Procedures for Alert Memoranda" specified.

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4. One matter you may want to give personal consideration to concerns the view of some in the community that the Alert Memoranda system is dominated by CIA. We believe some of the conditions that perpetuate that view are slowly changing. Your own encouragement of others--primarily DIA and INR--to initiate and provide the first draft probably would be useful.

5. Other recommendations are relatively minor. The system has apparently worked well and is getting smoother and better as it evolves. The draft in essentially its present form has been reviewed by George Carver and appropriate NIOs, and they expressed general agreement with the findings and the way they were expressed.

6. I will postpone further action on this until I receive your views on it, and your thoughts on further dissemination.

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Samuel V. Wilson  
Lieutenant General, USA  
D/DCI/IC

**Attachment:**

Report on Intelligence  
Alert Memoranda

**Distribution:**

**Original - DCI**

- 1 - DDCI
- 1 - ER
- 1 - D/DCI/IC
- 1 - C/PRD (& PRD Chrono)
- ① - IC Registry
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A REPORT ON INTELLIGENCE ALERT MEMORANDA

1 August 1975

Prepared by the

Product Review Division, Intelligence Community Staff

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A REPORT ON INTELLIGENCE ALERT MEMORANDA

1 August 1975

This study, prepared by the Product Review Division of the Intelligence Community Staff, responds to a request by the Director of Central Intelligence for a review of Intelligence Alert Memoranda produced to date. He wished to know both how well the system has served him and the community and how well it has served the high level consumer.

KEY FINDINGS

Considering the numbers of persons who either were important recipients or who have had some role in the production of Alert Memoranda, a unanimity of views on all aspects of this intelligence medium was neither expected nor was it achieved. There was, however, substantial agreement among both producers and senior level consumers that we consulted on the following key points:

- \* The basic concept of the Alert Memorandum (AM) is sound. Those that have been produced to date have by and large done what they were designed to do.
- \* Alert Memoranda are being seen--and their message noted--by principals and senior aides in the national security decision process: they are not being short-stopped by lower level staff mechanisms.

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- \* The system is not being seriously abused by over-use. Given the circumstances which led to their preparation, few of the fifteen Alert Memoranda so far produced are judged to have been hasty or ill-advised. In general, those consulted judged this to be not a bad record.
- \* Conversely, no serious charges of oversight have been leveled at the community because of neglect of the AM form when it might have been used. (One possible such case--the Mayaguez incident--was mentioned by one respondent, and this point is discussed later in the paper.)
- \* There was general recognition among most of those interviewed that the production process has evolved--and improved--with the passage of time and as experience in this form of product has been gained.

Nevertheless, differences of view--some fundamental in nature--surfaced on a number of points of form and substance. The more important of these are identified below:

- \* There are varying perceptions of the appropriate criteria to use for the selection of particular events and situations to be handled in the Alert Memorandum process. This reflects a lack of consensus on the relative weights that should be placed on how important the subject is to US interests, how quickly it needs to be addressed by policy councils, and how likely it is that it will occur.
- \* Some respondents suggested that it would be helpful to have a more standardized format--one that had better attention-getting qualities, and which would insure that each AM uniformly addressed certain questions. Others emphasized the values of an unconstrained form and style.

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- \* Although the AM was designed as a community mechanism--and the NIOs have sought the views of other agencies when time permitted--the Alert Memorandum is still viewed by many to be either a CIA product or as reflecting a personal concern of the DCI rather than of the community. Close involvement by other agencies in recommending or participating in production of Alert Memoranda has been minimal--far less than we judge to have been the goal of the DCI and the USIB in establishing the system.

The findings are covered in greater detail in following sections of the study, and recommendations are set forth beginning on page 20. The recommendations themselves are relatively minor. Indeed, the flexibility of the process has been important to its evolution and growth and we see little need to introduce major new restrictive or prescriptive provisions into the system.

An exception to the above involves a few practices that have grown out of experience in producing Alert Memoranda and which now have become normative to the process. They should--in our view--be codified by insertion into the "Procedures for Alert Memoranda" (see Annex B). There are three of these:

- \* The practice of speedy notification of Washington area intelligence operations centers as soon as a decision has been made to produce an Alert Memorandum.
- \* The practice--when time permits--of early notification of US embassies and other appropriate field elements in the geographic area discussed that an Alert Memorandum is in process, with an invitation for comments and suggestions.

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- \* The practice of electrical dissemination of the finished paper to those same embassies and field elements.

The remaining recommendations for the most part can be met by placing heavier emphasis (by the DCI and USIB) on existing procedures in an attempt to meet problems seen by some of our respondents. USIB discussion, for example, might help to clarify some of these issues. This particularly applies to the question of how to achieve greater community involvement in initiating and producing Alert Memoranda.

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